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ABSTRACT

Graduate programs preparing practitioners in educational administration typically include a course in school and community relations. This is examined in the context of the views of administrator practitioners, professional organizations, university graduate courses, and public opinion. Students generally are not provided opportunity to experience hands-on applications of the components included in such courses. A course-long simulation activity is described in which students work in a group and practice several school and community relations activities that revolve around an imaginary school district. Eleven components of the simulation activity are presented and discussed. In addition, assignments given to one student group and their work are used as an example. The simulation culminates with a capstone public relations project for each imaginary school district, developed and presented by the respective group to the entire class. (RR)

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CONDUCTING A SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM USING SIMULATED SCHOOL DISTRICT INFORMATION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Abstract

Graduate programs preparing practitioners in educational administration typically include a course in school and community relations. Students generally are not provided opportunity to experience hands-on applications of the components included in such courses. This paper describes a course-long simulation activity in which students work in a group and practice several school and community relations activities that revolve around an imaginary school district. The simulation culminates with a capstone public relations project for each imaginary school district that is developed and presented by the respective group to the entire class.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

A perusal of nearly every college and university bulletin or catalog in which programs in educational administration are included a course in school and community relations or school public relations is listed and described. In addition, most states will recommend, if not require, some course work in the area of school and community relations for administrator certification. Most students of educational administration programs will register for and complete some course in the subject. The importance of such course work is not questioned.

The study of school and community relations is not viewed by most professors of educational administration as one of the more rigorous topics. It does not carry the status, for instance, as courses in methods of research, school law, school finance, or personnel administration. The topic does get considerable attention, however, in other ways. Nearly every department in educational administration will list one, two, or more of its faculty members as the designated specialists in school and community relations. The course is offered with frequent regularity at most institutions. Seldom does the course offering fail to fill classes because of insufficient enrollments.

The rigor of school and community relations, as a subject of study, is often in question. There is not considered to be a significant theoretical base for its content. Likewise, it is not the type of topic that is rewarded with great amounts of research funding. Theses and dissertations have been planned, developed, and written on topics encompassing school and community relations concerns. More often than not, though, those projects do not carry the typical labels of hard research or theoretical research. They are more frequently regarded as action research or practitioner oriented projects. The result is that the subject of school and community relations does not have much prestige within the field of educational administration.

Among the many and varied subjects that exist within the field of educational administration, school and community relations and related topics are frequently the focus of journal articles. There is little doubt of the importance of school and community relations activities among those administrators who are practitioners. They understand the importance of positive relations with the community, and are continually interested in learning more about how to conduct themselves so that community relations can be improved.

Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1990) point out that in recent years the importance of school-community relations and overall school public relations has grown rapidly. They refer to studies in which superintendents of schools were surveyed and asked which courses they wish they had taken more of when they were in their administrator preparation programs. In most of those studies, communications and community relations were listed among the more important courses, often first or second.

Public confidence in schools has been less positive in recent years. The annual Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward public schools has been reported for twenty-two years in the Phi Delta Kappan. In the most recent poll, parents felt that they should have more say regarding seven different areas in public schools (Elam 1990). Generally, the public cares about its schools and school administrators are required to respond to that caring in positive ways.

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) recommended that preparation

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programs for educational administrators undergo significant changes. Among the recommendations made in its report is that clinical studies, supervised practice, and practical application of theory are central to programs being proposed. Further, it states that the proposed curriculum should be practice-based and practice-driven.

The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration approved, at its 1990 Annual Conference in Los Angeles, a set of goals and objectives for the profession. Among them was to initiate the development of contemporary case studies, simulations, and the like, for use in courses in professional development.

Textbooks and materials available for courses in school and community relations are plentiful. Textbooks are characterized as complete in their application of what is known about relationships between schools and publics. They draw on several appropriate fields of study that lend themselves to applications of theory and research dealing with communications, publications, media, etc.

Complete journals are devoted to school public relations. Other journals in education and educational administration devote considerable attention to topics related to school and community relations concerns. These include surveys of practice, helpful suggestions, and positions of individuals and organizations concerned about how schools relate with their publics.

Materials including booklets, brochures, videotapes, and packets of all kinds are produced by professional organizations and private consultants. These materials are typically focused on a particular single topic to respond to a specific need of schools.

In all of these books and materials, however, little is available in a simulation mode dealing solely with school and community relations. The practical applications to local school districts is normally attained only through arrangements for individual internships and practica. Such experiences are not widely used except by doctoral students. The preparation of most practitioners for our public schools and school districts, however, comes in Master's and Specialist's degrees, not at the doctoral level.

DESCRIPTION OF A SIMULATION IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

What is described here is a simulation that was developed for inclusion in a graduate level course in School and Community Relations. It has been used four times, each time with minor alterations and/or additions. Each time it has generated varied results, and reflects quite well the personalities of individuals and the groups involved in the activity.

There are eleven components to the overall simulation activity. It accompanies and supplements the more traditional lecture and class discussion format used in most graduate courses in educational administration. The pattern and chronology of the course generally follows the outline of the textbook recommended for the course (Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher 1990).

Students enrolled in the course are assigned to small work groups of between four and six members. The configuration of each group's composition of membership is intended to provide diversity of background and current position in the field of education. For instance, no group would be composed entirely of students whose background was elementary education, nor would any group be comprised totally of students whose positions at the time were as coaches.

Each group assumed the role of an administrative team for a different school district. Each school district was given a unique name and carried a different set of characteristics. In all, seven imaginary school districts have been created; thus seven small work groups can be accommodated at one time without the need for duplication. The seven imaginary school districts have the following names: Centerville, Crestfall, Edgewood, Farmdale, Forward, Prairie View, and Rimridge.

Each of the eleven components of the simulation is presented and discussed here. In addition, the assignments given to the Centerville Schools student groups and their work are presented as examples.

COMPONENT 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

After the small work groups have been identified and assembled the first time, background information about each group's imaginary school district is provided.

Beginning Information

Centerville Schools is located in a city of approximately 65,000 and covers an area of 95 square miles of rolling terrain. Located in the district is light manufacturing and a retailing center for some 100,000 population. The composition of the population in the district is about 80% Caucasian and the remaining 20% comprised primarily of Blacks. There is a very small number of Hispanic and Native Americans in the area. The economic make-up is basically middle class. There is a

small section in the city that would be classified as wealthy, and there is about 10% of the population that would be classed as poor. The source of income for the population is primarily from the retailing in the city and blue collar workers in the manufacturing concerns in the community. Employment is generally good.

There are two high schools (10-12), two junior high schools (7-9), and twelve elementary schools. In the city, also, is one parochial high school and two parochial elementary feeder schools, all Roman Catholic. The superintendent of schools has been in the position for five years. Prior to that he was assistant superintendent for five years, and served as high school principal for six years before that. The Board of Education is stable, with one member elected two years ago. All others on the Board have served from 4-8 years each.

The tax base for the community comes from commercial, industrial, and residential property. Tax rates are nearly average for the state, and no problems have occurred regarding referral measures, millage votes, etc.

The student drop-out rate has remained at about 12% over the past five years. Approximately 50% of the graduates attend post-secondary education. There have been no national merit scholars or finalists in five years, and students who attend colleges and universities typically do not qualify for scholarships and fellowships based on academics.

Education beyond high school is valued by about 50% of the people in the community. The remaining 50% see high school as sufficient and do not encourage college or university attendance.

Teachers' salaries are about at the state average. There has never been a strike, and negotiations have always moved along without great difficulty. Settlements have been made within a reasonable time frame and have not dragged out. All parties have appeared to be satisfied with the outcomes.

COMPONENT 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A lecture and class discussion on the topic of needs assessment and its importance in developing appropriate and positive relations with the community takes place at this time. Student work groups are asked to generate a list of additional information they feel they need in order to better understand their community. They are asked to consider what they already know about their community, and how that causes them to wonder about other pieces of information and data. This list is submitted to the instructor.

COMPONENT 3: SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

From the generated lists of the small work groups, additional information is provided. The content of this information emanated at first from the instructor's creativity and knowledge about school districts generally. In later iterations of the activity, similar needs were sought by the small work groups, and reference to previous needs assessments was all that was necessarry. From a file of supplementary information appropriate parts can be recalled and assembled for submission to the appropriate small work group. The instuctor produces additional information based upon what the small work group has identified as necessary.

Additional Information Generated from Needs Assessment

K-12 curriculum is well-articulated throughout the district and reviewed regularly through the auspices of several subject area and grade level curriculum committees, each headed by an administrator and comprised of a representation of teachers from across the district. It exceeds the state minimum requirements at all levels and is responsive to the expressed needs of the district through parent advisory committees, curriculum committees, and Board of Education periodic reviews. A Curriculum Director at the central office oversees all curriculum development and evaluation for the district. A wide array of electives exists at the high school level, several exploratory offerings are included in the junior high level, and elementary levels have available sufficient curricululm materials and supplies to carry out nearly every curricular need.

Test scores on standardized instruments have consistently ranked at approximately the 55th percentile. Specific areas that have deviated from this general level are the following: Junior high math scores usually fall at about the 60th percentile while the junior reading scores hover just above the 45th percentile. At the elementary level all scores are near the 55th percentile. High school math scores typically fall near the 55th percentile, while reading comprehension scores are at about the 45th percentile. The range of scores are typical.

Citizens expect high quality educational opportunities for all students. This includes extensive offerings for the college bound students as well as the non college bound. They expect basic skills

to be learned at the elementary level and for students to be able to explore in a variety of areas in the middle years. At the high school level the expectation is that students can concentrate, expand, and engage in advanced study opportunities. They expect college bound students to have available extensive course offerings in foreign languages, science, math, and literature. They want fine arts opportunities for all who desire it, and vocational offerings for students who desire to pursue that line of study and for the non college bound students.

Light manufacturing establishments include:

Safety Engineering, a manufacturer of small fire extinguishers
Midstates Gear, a manufacturer of component gear parts for automobile transmissions
Central Suppliers, a manufacturer of robotic component parts
Sand Chips, a manufacturer of computer chips and related parts
Stamping Products, a manufacturer of trophies, awards, and similar items
Edwin Smith Co., a maker of exclusive designer clothing for men, women, and children
Baltimore Bottle Works, a manufacturer of bottles and containers for the pharmaceutical industry

Retailing establishments include:

Nearly all of the major national department store chains
Several locally owned clothing stores
A well-rounded and extensive array of retailing establishments in the areas of food, hardware, jewelry, and transportation
Most of the retailing is located in three somewhat large shopping malls. Some locally owned stores are located in the downtown area.

Employment predictions suggest stability in the work force needs. All retailing and light industry establishments are showing reasonable profits and moderate growth that will require steady but small employability needs over the short term. Greatest needs in the employment is likely to fall in the service industry.

Decision makers in the community lies primarily in the managerial levels of the industries, the larger merchants, and the professional people in the community. The ethnic minorities are generally not included in the community decision making structure except as they are employed in the identified group of decision makers. The religious leaders have no significant impact on the community's decisions. The Chamber of Commerce is a strong voice and wields considerable influence over the decisions made by the city council.

Dropouts come primarily from among the minority and poorer segments of the population. No clear-cut reason has been identified as contributing to the dropout configuration.

College and university attendance appears to be expected only for the more affluent and brightest students. The poorer and the minorities are generally tracked into the vocational programs and not encouraged to pursue college bound preparation programs while in high school.

Standardized test scores represent quite well the abilities of students, and is the likely reason for the lack of scholarships and fellowships for students as they enter colleges. The students that attend higher education institutions are either able to afford the tuition and costs or find employment and take education loans. Students are generally not aware of what financial aids are available until they enter college. Most students attend state supported colleges and universities located within 100 miles of home. Few attend private colleges and universities.

Staff attitudes are generally positive. They like the community in which they live and work and most intend to remain there. Relations between school and community are positive, pressureless, and pleasant. Teachers tend to teach the way they have always taught, are receptive to new ideas, but actually do little real changing. Change that does occur does so gradually over a several-year period of time.

For the most part, the advisory groups are comprised of the people in the community that have the better students, are college bound, and/or are active in extracurricular opportunities. The Board of Education members are not trouble makers and want to get along well with teachers, administrators, and influential members of the community. The decisions that are made are often done so with this in mind. There is seldom a split vote among the members of the Board of Education. Board of Education meetings typically do not have more than 10 or 12 people in attendance, often comprised of those who are making a presentation or representing an interest group whose interest is being approved at that specific meeting.

COMPONENT 4: POLICY STATEMENT

After the small work groups have received all the information that they requested they are asked then to develop a public relations policy statement that is appropriate for their school district. They are asked to consider any peculiar characteristics of their school district as they develop this

policy statement. At the same time, they are advised that the policy statement will serve as their guide in decisions they may be required to make later in the simulation activity.

Policy Statement Assignment

1. *What kinds of policy should the school district have regarding public relations activities?*
2. *Who should be in charge of public relations activities?*
3. *Generate a written policy statement for a district's public relations activities.*
4. *What roles should the following play in school public relations activities:*
   a. *the superintendent?*
   b. *the building principals?*
   c. *non-administrative employees of the school district?*
   d. *non-employees of the school district?*

Examples of policy statement assignments generated by small work groups appear here.

Generated Policy Statement Number 1

The Centerville Board of Education is committed to a philosophy of open and honest communication. The Board recognizes the need for input from the community, staff, students, and parents.

The Board will at all times adhere to the spirit and intent of federal and state statutes which regulate communication between the school and the community.

The Board supports an on-going program with the goal of updating the community about the programs, operations, objectives, needs, and accomplishments of the district.

The Board supports a program that utilizes all forms of media and communication.

The Superintendent or his/her designee has the responsibility of administering this policy and periodically updating the Board.

Generated Policy Statement Number 2

Centerville Schools is committed to a public relations policy of open and honest communication between school and community. This will be accomplished by the following components:

Superintendent--communicator between assistant superintendent and the Board.

Assistant Superintendent--responsible for previewing and approving all communications to media. Also responsible for updating and informing building level administrators of current issues and changes in system.

Building Principals--responsible for communications to the public in their school attendance area regarding upcoming events, current issues, and any items of interest dealing with the school. This will be done by newsletters, flyers, brochures, and any other appropriate form of communication that will be circulated by mailings and postings in key community locations.

Athletic Directors--responsible for keeping public informed and current on all changes within extra curricular program. This will be done by brochures, schedules, media advertisements (prior approval from assistant superintendent), and any other appropriate form of communication as deemed by athletic director.

Teachers--responsible for communicating student progress to parents as approved by board.

Generated Policy Statement Number 3

In order to best meet the needs of the students in Centerville Schools, the board believes that cooperation is essential between the schools, staff, students, parents and community. Effective communication is a two-way responsibility with participation from both the school and community involved in the decision making process.

Forms of communication to be used include the daily newspaper, community calendars, television networks (local affiliates), the cable bulletin board (channel 34) and area radio stations.

Overall planning activities including faculty, administrators, parents of students and key communicators will be utilized on a regular basis in the Centerville Schools.

The responsibility for obtaining this cooperation is delegated to the superintendent by the board.

Generated Policy Statement Number 4

The superintendent is responsible to act as a communicator interacting with the many different organizations, to encourage and promote positive public relations throughout the community.

The curriculum/community relations director will be responsible for consistent recognition of academics and athletic programs throughout Centerville Community Schools, keeping the public

informed on current and all changes within our system.

Principals will be responsible to promote positive public relations on his building, to keep the curriculum/public relations director informed of upcoming events in advance.

Athletic Directors will be responsible to keep the public informed and current on all changes within our extracurricular program.

Coaches will be responsible to see that his sport and athlete is given every opportunity through public relations to excel to his potential.

All press releases concerning Centerville Community Schools and their activities must go through the Curriculum/Public Relations director.

COMPONENT 5: PRESS RELEASE

Each small work group is provided with an assignment to produce a press release appropriate for the formal media. This activity follows the lecture and class discussion pertaining to working with the media, and the guidelines most appropriate for issuing press releases.

Press Release Assignment

You have received the latest test scores on the National Student Achievement Test (NSAT). This is a test that is given during the month of March each year to grades five, eight, and eleven. It is a nationally normed test that measures student achievement in four areas and a composite (or overall) score. The results are as follows:

Elementary		
	Reading	*55th percentile*
	Mathematics	*54th percentile*
	Social Studies	*55th percentile*
	Science	*56th percentile*
	Overall	*55th percentile*
Junior High		
	Reading	*45th percentile*
	Mathematics	*60th percentile*
	Social Studies	*54th percentile*
	Science	*58th percentile*
	Overall	*56th percentile*
High School		
	Reading	*44th percentile*
	Mathematics	*55th percentile*
	Social Studies	*53rd percentile*
	Science	*56th percentile*
	Overall	*54th percentile*

Examples of press release assignments appear here.

Press Release Example Number 1

Superintendent Joe Comer announced today that Centerville Public School students once again scored within the top half of the country on a national achievement test.

The NSAT is a national test that measures student achievement in the areas of Reading, Math, Social Studies and Science. The test is given annual to 5, 8, & 11 graders in March.

Supt. Comer said, "I am very pleased with the results. This is truly an endorsement of our curriculum and a credit to our staff and students."

Press Release Example Number 2

Centerville Public Schools has received this year's scores on the National Student Achievement Test (NSAT) given in March to students in grades five, eight, and eleven.

NSAT, which is nationally normed, measures student achievement in reading, math, social studies and science. The composite (or overall) scores were consistent with previous years and continue to be in the top one half of the nation.

Superintendent Scott Roberts stated, "I was pleased with our math, science, social studies and overall percentiles. We are continuously looking at ways to improve and to be the best that we can be."

Roberts added, "The lowest results, as in previous years, were in junior high and high school reading. We are currently in the process of exploring methods to strengthen this program."

Complete scores by subject matter and grade level are on file and available for inspection in the Superintendent's office.

Press Release Example Number 3

Results of the National Student Achievement Test were released to Centerville Schools today. The test is administered during the month of March each year to grades five, eight, and eleven. It is a national test which measures student achievement in math, reading, social studies, and science, and a composite (or overall) score.

The Centerville scores have consistently ranked at the 55th percentile out of a 100 percentile range. The scores are as follows:

Elementary		
	Reading	55th percentile
	Mathematics	54th percentile
	Social Studies	55th percentile
	Science	56th percentile
	Overall	55th percentile
Junior High		
	Reading	45th percentile
	Mathematics	60th percentile
	Social Studies	54th percentile
	Science	58th percentile
	Overall	56th percentile
High School		
	Reading	44th percentile
	Mathematics	55th percentile
	Social Studies	53rd percentile
	Science	56th percentile
	Overall	54th percentile

Press Release Example Number 4

Centerville Students Score Above National Average on Standardized Tests

The Centerville School District just received the results from the National Student Achievement Test. This is a test that is given during the month of March each year to grades 5, 8, and 11. It is a nationally administered test that measures student achievement in the areas of Reading, Math, Social Studies, and Science. At the elementary level, students scored above the national average in all four areas. Junior High and High School students exceeded the averages in Math, Social Studies, and Science.

Dr. Edward Brown, Centerville's curriculum director, stated, "Our school improvement efforts are having a positive effect on student achievement." He continued, "It appears there is a need to focus on secondary reading programs, however."

COMPONENT 6: INTERVIEW ACTIVITY

Since school administrators are frequently called upon to be interviewed by the media, attention is given to what must be considered as interviews are conducted. Students are provided with techniques to keep in mind as they are interviewed, types of interviews that are likely to occur, and a variety of techniques used by media interviewers.

Students are organized into groups different than their small work groups. They are configured in such a way that no member of the small work group of the Centerville Schools, for instance, is included in the interview group.

Interview Activity Assignment

Attached is information about a specific school district. Your task is to assume the role of media person who will interview a representative of the school district in order to learn more about this topic and produce a news story for your particular media.

The interviewer will do the actual interviewing later in the week. The assistants are to help generate questions, follow-up questions, etc. that will be used by the interviewer. Consideration should be given to having the questions elicit newsworthy information that will be of interest to the public in the community.

Interviewer: Carlene Shortz
Assistants: John Prescott

Kim Kolbe
Cathy McHalpine

Topic to pursue: *Latest National Student Achievement Test (NSAT) scores show the local junior high school reading achievement to be at the 45th percentile and the high school reading achievement to be at the 44th percentile nationally. All other areas of the test are above the 50th percentile. You are wanting to know why reading is so much lower than everything else.*

COMPONENT 7: INTERVIEW PREPARATION

The small work groups are reconvened. One member of each small work group is designated as the Superintendent of Schools. The groups are given an assignment to prepare for an interview of the designated Superintendent of Schools of the respective school district by a member of the news media. The small work group assumes the role of administrative team members to help prepare the Superintendent of Schools for the upcoming interview. This becomes a cooperative group project.

Information Provided to the Small Work Group

Interviewee: Joe Comer, Centerville Schools Superintendent

You have just been contacted by a member of the news team from a television station that serves your school district. The news reporter has asked for an interview with you tomorrow regarding a situation that appears to have the interest of the public. You have agreed to hold the interview. Your task now is to make preparations for that interview. Your fellow administrators in the district will assist you in preparing for the interview. You and your team should focus on what facts and information you can and should provide in the interview, and anticipate the kinds of questions you may be asked. Similarly, you and your administrator colleagues need to begin planning a strategy to follow for both the interview and the time following it.

As you prepare yourself for the upcoming interview you need to know what information the news reporter has in his/her possession. It is as follows:

Topic to pursue: *Latest National Student Achievement Test (NSAT) scores show the local junior high school reading achievement to be at the 45th percentile and the high school reading achievement to be at the 44th percentile nationally. All other areas of the test are above the 50th percentile. You are wanting to know why reading is so much lower than everything else.*

COMPONENT 8: INTERVIEW

A schedule is generated for the interviews of the students assuming the role of superintendent by the designated news media representatives. Interviewers and superintendents are instructed that the interviews should not exceed twenty minutes. All interviews are videotaped in their entirety. During the interviews all other class members are observing what occurs.

Following the interviews there is an open discussion of what took place. Any statements that were made that could be identified as potential problems are discussed. Excerpts from the videotapes are often viewed to illustrate examples of both positive and negative potentials for the imaginary school districts used in the simulations.

As time permits, videotapes are edited into fifteen-second and thirty-second cuts that potentially could be used by a television reporter for a local news item. Such examples illustrate vividly to the students the importance of care in preparation for interviews in order to know what they should say when asked questions that have the potential for becoming misconstrued. Additionally, the preparation serves to have students anticipate questions and think about the most appropriate responses in order to be the most informative to the public. Viewing the playback of the videotape either in whole or in part helps to provide this perspective.

COMPONENT 9: IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Small work groups are asked to identify the types of persons that should exist in their respective imaginary communities that could serve as resources. Resource files are created identifying groups that should be represented, persons with particular types of skills and backgrounds, and special needs that should be met in the district. An identification of the number and kind of persons that should serve as key communicators for the district is made. The small work groups are asked to specify how they would plan to utilize the key communicators group in their particular imaginary school district.

Each resource file is then shared with other small work groups and supplemented based upon suggestions for improvement by the lists from other small work groups. The small work groups have developed a camaraderie among themselves by this stage in the simulation and show considerable pride in the products of their deliberations. At the same time, they are not encouraged to compete with other groups. Rather, they share openly and willingly the ideas they generate and appear to want to be helpful in assisting another small work group with its peculiar circumstances. Frequently a class member will mention that his or her particular imaginary school district must be "so-and-so" school district because something is known about it. The imaginary school districts take on a great sense of reality to the students.

COMPONENT 10: IDENTIFICATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Small work groups are asked to develop both permanent and ad hoc advisory committees. The permanent advisory committees must be identified with appropriate titles and composition of membership. Length of terms of advisory committee members must be explained. Small work groups are asked to consider the appropriate language to be used in developing a policy statement to authorize such permanent advisory committees. To whom the committees report and the extent of their authority must also be considered and written as a part of the policy statement.

Ad hoc advisory committees require a different kind of rigor and exactness. Small work groups are asked to identify the types of ad hoc advisory committees they wish to create for their respective imaginary school districts. Included in the description of each ad hoc advisory committee must be the title or name of the committee, its purpose for existing, its membership composition, its length of existence, and to whom it reports. Such ad hoc advisory committees should emanate from the needs of the imaginary school district identified earlier in the simulation.

Each small work group shares information of its decisions regarding advisory committees with the other small work groups. A discussion of the merits, suggestions, and possible concerns about any of the advisory committees follows.

COMPONENT 11: GROUP PUBLIC RELATIONS PROJECT

The capstone activity of the simulation is a project developed by the small work group. The project must respond at least to the problems and/or concerns that appeared throughout the simulation's activities. The project may go beyond those problems and/or concerns and be a complete district public relations program, or it may be a thoroughly developed project that responds only to one aspect of the simulation. In either case, the small work groups are encouraged to enlist both creative ideas and sound, proven practices in their public relations project. They are urged also to seek ideas and practices from other professions besides their own of educational administration. Their project plans should include various timelines, cost estimates, assignment of responsibility, and means for evaluating the results of their efforts.

Each small work group is allotted from between one and one and a half hour to present its project to the entire class. The groups may use any medium they wish to illustrate their respective projects. This may include videotape presentations, slide/tape presentations, use of overhead projector with acetate overlays, brochures developed, and other printed materials.

Within the allotted time the small work group makes a formal presentation and allows some time for answering questions, making clarifications if needed, and responding to suggestions from other class members. As a minimum, one copy of each item developed is submitted to the instructor. Some small work groups produce sufficient copies to distribute to each member of the class.

SUMMARY

The simulation activity, although not representing or describing any known school district, takes on a modicum of reality to the small work groups as they consider, discuss, prepare, and plan for each of the components in the simulation. Problem-solving and decision-making concepts are put into practice in the same manner as if the school districts were real. Likewise, the concept of cooperative learning is practiced in a very real way and students preparing to become school administrators have the opportunity to learn first hand that administrators are not required to be autocratic to be successful. Rather, they learn to consult with others, to develop trust, and to delegate responsibilities.

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